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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PORT AU PRINCE 001054

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TAGS: PGOV PREL HA  
SUBJECT: HAITI IN POLITICAL GRIDLOCK: DAY 103

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1019

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The political standoff in the process of confirming a new Haitian Prime Minister continued this week. President Preval and PM-designate Michele Pierre-Louis face intense pressure to negotiate with political parties and with members of Parliament on the formation of a cabinet and elaboration of a general political platform for the next government. This is occurring despite the fact that this first phase of the confirmation process is supposed to focus exclusively on the Prime Minister-designate's constitutional eligibility. A group of nine senators -- the rump of the "Group of 16" that voted April 12 to oust the government of PM Alexis -- has begun negotiating as a bloc for the representation of political parties in the government. Preval and PM-designate Pierre Louis apparently want a government of technocrats with only loose ties to political parties and other sectors of society. Although Pierre-Louis appears to have barely enough votes to pass the upcoming Senate vote, she must win over several additional senators, who are promising to boycott the vote and keep the Senate short of a quorum if their demand for inclusion of political parties is not met. Preval was to meet with senators July 24 in an attempt to win them over. If Pierre-Louis wins this vote in the Senate, she still faces an uphill battle to form a government and elaborate a political platform that can pass a vote of confidence in both legislative chambers. The success of Pierre-Louis' candidacy and future government is still far from assured. End summary.

Senate Examining Eligibility

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¶2. (C) Pierre-Louis formally presented her dossier documenting her constitutional eligibility for the office of PM to the Senate July 18. A Senate commission headed by Senator Michel Clerie (Fusion, Grand'Anse) has studied the dossier. Clerie told Polcouns July 23 the commission report was complete, supported Pierre-Louis' eligibility, and had been submitted to Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespwa, North) that same day. Bastien told Poloff July 21 that he would await a resolution of the larger question of general policy and cabinet posts, as contained in demands made by

several senators, prior to calling a vote to decide on Pierre-Louis' constitutional eligibility. His goal was to help Pierre-Louis pass both this Senate vote and the subsequent vote on her government and political platform. President Bastien guaranteed that all of Lespwa's six voting senators would vote in favor of Pierre-Louis in the ratification round. (Note: According to Senate rules, the Senate President does not vote except to break a tie. End note.)

Group of 9 Senators Becomes "Swing Vote"

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13. (C) The core issue for Senators still not committed to supporting Pierre-Louis is their demand that she and President Preval guarantee that political parties will be represented in Pierre-Louis' cabinet. In the Senate, a "Group of Nine" comprising the remnant of the group of 16 senators that ousted PM Alexis in April has been negotiating with political parties and President Preval over terms of forming the next government. According to Senator Eddy Bastien (Alyans, Northwest), the group has continued to meet informally in the months following the Alexis interpellation, but has become more close-knit over the last few weeks. Senator Bastien described the group's two demands as 1) integration of political parties into the government, and 2) a public declaration from Pierre-Louis denying allegations she is homosexual. He said they also needed a guarantee from President Preval that political parties would be included in the next government.

14. (C) Senator Michel Clerie (Fusion, Grand'Anse) told PolCouns July 23 that Pierre-Louis already had the nine votes needed to confirm her constitutional eligibility. However,

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absent assurances from President Preval on the terms of forming the next government, dissenting Senators would stay away, prevent a quorum, and hold up the confirmation vote for Pierre-Louis. Clerie said he had spoken to President Preval and strongly urged him to engage the political parties and the "Group of Nine" to reach some agreement on forming a government, in order to ensure Pierre-Louis' success in the upcoming Senate vote. Clerie reported that Preval said he would think about the suggestion.

15. (C) Senator Rudy Heriveaux (Fanmi Lavalas, West) publicly and privately to Emboffs has stated categorically that he can vote for Pierre-Louis only if the "nine" receive assurances that political parties are allowed to designate ministers to represent them in the government, and that the government reflects the political complexion of parliament. Such party-designated ministers would be experts in their field, not party activists. However, Heriveaux insisted that political parties must have the right to designate who represents them in the government. Heriveaux said it was imperative that President Preval and Pierre-Louis meet with the undecided Senators and political parties, to include his own party, to win them over. He told PolCouns July 23 that Preval had agreed to a meeting with the "Group of Nine" on July 24. Confirming what Clerie had reported, Heriveaux promised that absent an agreement, a number of Senators from the "Nine" would stay away from the Senate, keeping numbers short of a quorum and preventing a vote to confirm Pierre-Louis.

16. (C) Senate President Bastien has also urged President Preval to sit down with Senators and the parties. He told Poloff July 21 that he had spoken to Preval July 18 about this. Preval assured Bastien there was no truth to the parties' claim that Preval plans to "exclude" them from the cabinet. Bastien urged the President to work with political parties if Pierre-Louis is to have a chance in the Senate. Bastien said he also told Preval that Haiti cannot afford to go through the process of selecting and confirming a PM candidate a fourth time.

## Political Parties Demanding Inclusion

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¶ 17. (C) Certain political Party representatives share the view of the 'Group of Nine' that Presidential assurances that parties will be represented in the next government are needed in order to confirm Pierre-Louis in the upcoming Senate vote. Fusion's spokesperson, Micha Gaillard, told Poloff July 21 that Pierre-Louis needed to meet with political parties and parliamentarians to assure them that if confirmed, she and Preval would not ignore them and govern without a confirmed cabinet and political platform. (Note: Gaillard's concern, shared by several other political leaders, hails from Preval's first term (1996-2001), when then-PM Alexis' cabinet was never confirmed but continued to govern nevertheless. End note.) Fusion was suggesting a pact between the PM-designate, political parties, and 'certain parliamentarians' that would guarantee cooperation in governing Haiti.

¶ 18. (C) OPL President Edgard Leblanc told Poloff July 24 that six parties had put in writing a ''protocol'' agreeing on major policy directives and a ''plurality government,' in which political parties are represented in the government in proportion to their representation in parliament. Leblanc said that when the party leaders presented the document to Preval, he tossed it aside and said he would never sign it. When party leaders raised the subject with Pierre-Louis, she claimed the President had never shared the document with her.

¶ 19. (C) According to Leblanc, in a July 21 meeting with political parties, Pierre-Louis refused to answer questions about her plans for composition of her government. She told the parties that she and Preval had not discussed her cabinet or general policy platform, and at the President's insistence would not do so until after she is confirmed as PM. Leblanc is convinced that Preval and Pierre-Louis are adamantly opposed to including political parties in their government. Citing Preval's invitation to meet July 24 with senators

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without political parties, Leblanc theorized that Preval is attempting to cut a deal with the Senate without consulting parties, thereby cutting the parties out of the government.

¶ 10. (C) Fritz Longchamp, Chief of Staff to Preval, told Polcouns July 23 that the President had no intention of keeping parties out of the government. A certain number of technocrats with loose ties to parties serving as ministers would be acceptable. Other sectors, such as civil society groups and the business community, could also be represented in government. What was unacceptable was party activist-representatives serving in the cabinet. He expressed his concern that political party representatives in the cabinet might well spend all their energy lobbying for their parties' priorities instead of working for the common good.

## Private Sector Lobbying

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¶ 11. (C) Influential members of the private sector are also seeking a meeting with Preval to urge him to get a government in place quickly. According to HOPE Commission Executive Director George Sassine, the meeting would aim to pressure Preval to do everything in his power to support Pierre-Louis' candidacy. Members of the private sector also plan to meet individually with each of the senators following their meeting with the President. The American Chamber of Commerce in Haiti issued a press release July 22 commending the Chamber of Deputies for confirming Pierr-Louis' eligibility, and calling for all political, economic and social forces in Haiti to help move Haiti forward.

''Morality'' Issue Boomerangs against Senator

¶12. (SBU) One senator, a pastor who has opposed PM-designate Michele Pierre-Louis for her alleged homosexuality, now finds himself the target of morals allegations. Senator Youri Latrtue declared July 23 that an employee of the parliament had lodged a complaint earlier this week with the office of Senate President Kely Bastien that Senator Judnel Jean (Fusion, Northeast) had had an intimate relationship with her 17 year-old daughter. Senator Latortue, the President of the Senate's Justice and Public Security Committee, said this incident demonstrated the "pharisaic hypocrisy" of Senator Jean, and said the matter should be referred to the courts.

Pierre-Louis Thanks Deputies

¶13. (U) Pierre-Louis is taking a modest, politically astute public profile. Dressed in somber black, she presented her documents to the Senate personally on July 18, a day after the Chamber of Deputies had voted to confirm her. The same day, she issued a revised declaration thanking the deputies for ratifying "the choice of President Rene Preval." She specifically thanked the Cooperative of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP) and the Union of Parliamentarians for National Development (UPDN) for engaging in cordial and constructive meetings with her, and saluted the discipline of OPL and Fusion deputies, who abstained in accordance with their parties' instructions. She pledged that if confirmed as PM, she would govern for the "collective interest" and the "common good," as much for those who supported her nomination as those who did not.

Comment: Time for a Compromise

¶14. (C) Pierre-Louis is working with a very narrow margin in the Senate, where she needs nine votes for her initial confirmation, but 16 votes for the subsequent ratification of her general policies and cabinet. She also needs 16 Senators willing to show up, achieve a quorum, and hold the confirmation vote in the Senate. Senator Edmonde Supplice Beauzile (Fusion, Center) continues to adamantly oppose Pierre-Louis' candidacy on a "morality" basis, and the Senate president does not vote. That leaves just 16

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senators, and Pierre-Louis, if confirmed, will need the support of all of them in the subsequent vote on her cabinet and general policy declaration. Preval and Pierre-Louis remain locked in a game of chicken with political parties, with neither side willing to give in. To date, the "Group of Nine" has taken the side of the political parties, while the other nine support Preval and Pierre-Louis. Preval is focusing in on reluctant senators in hopes of wooing them to his side. Their negotiations over the next few days could prove decisive.

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